

**NORTH CENTRAL TEXAS FUSION CENTER
(NCTFC)**





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Overview

According to the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, a fusion center is defined as a collaborative effort of two or more agencies that provide resources, expertise, and/or information to the center with the goal of maximizing the ability to detect, prevent, apprehend, and respond to criminal and terrorist activity. Fusion centers are critical to the efficient and effective sharing of intelligence information among state, local, federal, and tribal agencies. The intelligence component of a fusion center focuses on the intelligence process, where information is collected, integrated, evaluated, analyzed, and disseminated. Non-traditional collectors of intelligence, such as public safety entities and private sector organizations, possess important information that can be “fused” with law enforcement data to provide meaningful information and intelligence about threats and criminal activity. The fusion center concept is integral to the Department of Homeland Security strategic initiative for information sharing.

Introduction

The North Central Texas Fusion Center (NCTFC) is regionally oriented and uses cross-jurisdictional and multi-disciplinary partnerships between local, state, federal, and tribal agencies, to include private sector participants. Applications of the NCTFC include improved natural disaster/accident mitigation and response, terrorism prevention, emerging health threat detection, and law enforcement investigation support.

The operational stakeholders of the NCTFC include law enforcement, public health, emergency management, fire and rescue, transportation, emergency operations centers, and private organizations. Other supporting and benefiting stakeholders include city and county administration, academia, information technology, state and federal agencies, and elected officials. The NCTFC communicates with many external organizations, including, but not limited to, the Texas Fusion Center located in Austin, the Centers for Disease Control, the Dallas High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, and the Dallas FBI Headquarters.

The NCTFC is integrated into the national network of state fusion centers, which have the ability to share information with partners at the local, state, federal, and tribal levels.



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Mission Statement

To protect the citizens of North Texas by creating a synergistic environment among governmental and corporate stakeholders. The North Central Texas Fusion Center takes an all-crimes, all-hazards approach to the intelligence cycle in an overall effort to mitigate threats or hazards to the North Central Texas Region, while protecting the constitutional rights of all citizens.

Vision Statement

The vision of the North Central Texas Fusion Center (NCTFC) is to achieve the mission through a cross-jurisdictional and multi-disciplinary approach. Goals and objectives are focused on the prediction and prevention of any actions that may cause harm to the citizens of the 16 counties within the North Central Texas region. These goals rely on effective information sharing strategies.

The NCTFC provides a centralized, comprehensive, multi-agency, information and intelligence sharing network. The actionable intelligence is used to enhance the operational effectiveness and efficiency of the all-hazards organizations dealing with public safety and first responder agencies throughout the North Central Texas region.

Authority

The Collin County Commissioners' Court has provided the authority that the North Central Texas Fusion Center (NCTFC) operates under. The Commissioners' Court also governs the NCTFC operations. Texas has no current laws guiding the authority for fusion centers.



Texas' Strategic Direction

The Texas Homeland Security Strategic Plan (2010-2015) serves as the foundation for the homeland security strategic planning process in Texas. Texas has adopted a statewide capabilities-based homeland security strategic planning process, consisting of four basic steps: assessing risk and identifying gaps, developing strategies, implementation, and synchronizing funding streams with homeland security outcomes.

Texas has developed three goals within this plan that are aligned with the President's highest-priority goals of prevention, protection, response and recovery. The Texas strategy also encompasses the seven national priorities for preparedness identified by the DHS, but has tailored them to meet the unique homeland security needs of Texas, given its size, geographic features, lengthy land and sea borders, and diversity.

1. Prevent terrorist attacks within Texas
2. Reduce vulnerability to terrorist attacks and other disasters
3. Minimize damage and quickly recover from terrorist attacks and other disasters

Organizational Structure

The homeland security efforts in Texas have been changing and adapting since the North Central Texas Fusion Center was created in 2006.

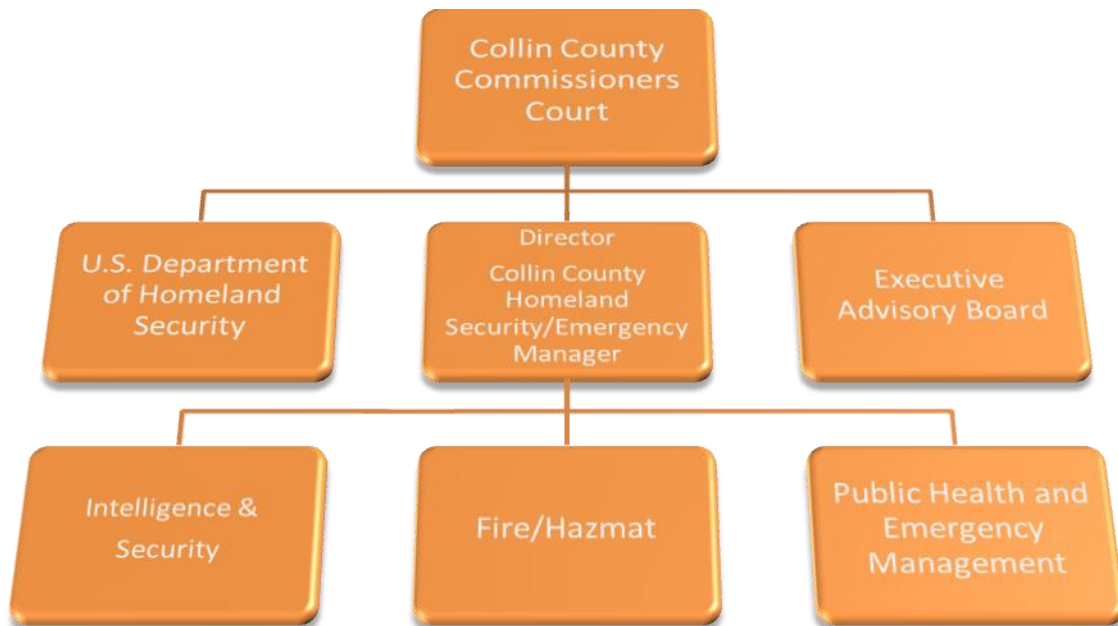
Following the attacks on 11 September 2001, the Collin County Commissioners' Court established the Homeland Security Department for Collin County. Kelley Stone was appointed Director of Homeland Security in Collin County and named the Collin County Emergency Management Coordinator. The Fire Marshal's Office was then placed under the Director of the Homeland Security Department in Collin County. A separate grant assisted in the formation of a Public Health and Emergency Management Team that was also placed under the direction of the Director of Homeland Security in Collin County.

Because of his background in law enforcement, the Collin County Commissioners' Court directed him to solve some of the major problems faced by law enforcement officials, most notably, information sharing. In order to do this, a multi-disciplinary information sharing system was proposed. Once there was enough interest in the project, the office of the Director of Homeland Security in Collin County applied for grants in order to get funding for the multi-disciplinary information sharing system. The North Central Texas Fusion Center (NCTFC) became operational in February 2006.



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Goals and Objectives

The North Central Texas Fusion Center (NCTFC) develops new goals and objectives annually. These goals and objectives adhere to those outlined in The Texas Homeland Security Strategy and other guiding documents. The Director of the Fusion Center assists the different elements in outlining their annual goals.

Executive Advisory Board

Although the North Central Texas Fusion Center (NCTFC) gets its authority from the Commissioners' Court, it is a cross-jurisdictional collaboration between federal, state, local and tribal agencies, as well as members of the private sector. Policies of the NCTFC will be guided by an Executive Advisory Board, which will be made up of individuals who represent the stakeholders of the Center.



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Funding

The North Central Texas Fusion Center (NCTFC) operates on local tax money from Collin County and uses federal grant dollars from the Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program and State Homeland Security Grant Programs. Money is also provided by the Urban Area Security Initiative.

Staffing

Employees of the North Central Texas Fusion Center (NCTFC) are a combination of civilian and law enforcement personnel. The NCTFC is fully operational from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Employees of the Fusion Center are also on-call after hours and on weekends so the Fusion Center can be staffed 24-hours per day, seven days a week.

Currently there are thirteen full-time staff members assigned to the NCTFC, including two members from the DHS, a Texas DPS Criminal Analyst, a Senior Intelligence Analyst, the Assistant Emergency Manager, the Fire Marshal, and five Public Health and Emergency Management team members.

NCTFC Operations

The North Central Texas Fusion Center (NCTFC) is divided into three sections: Threat Analysis, Emergency Management (including the Emergency Operations Center), and Requests for Information (RFIs)/Case Support. The NCTFC staff takes an all-crimes, all-hazards approach to the intelligence cycle and focuses on criminal interdiction, public health threats, agriculture threats, officer or public safety threats, and natural disasters.

Threat and Analysis: The NCTFC composes reports for dissemination to stakeholders and decision makers in the emergency services and critical infrastructure sectors. Sensitive information is distributed to the law enforcement community via “Law Enforcement Sensitive” reports via e-mail.

Emergency Management (Emergency Operations Center): In the event of an actual or suspected criminal or terrorist attack, or in the event of a natural disaster, the NCTFC coordinates with members of the affected critical infrastructure sectors, the Division of Emergency Management (DEM), local jurisdictions, the JTTF and DHS to ensure a coordinated intelligence exchange and to disseminate information and “best practices” in order to prevent or mitigate further attacks.



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Requests for Information/Case Support: Agencies can utilize the NCTFC analysts for routine requests for information and case support. NCTFC analysts will assist agencies by providing the requesting agency with link analysis, database searches and through the coordination of information between local, state, federal and tribal agencies.

Public Health and Emergency Management Team

The Collin County Public Health and Emergency Management Team are responsible for the preparation, response and recovery from disease outbreaks. Specifically, the Public Health and Emergency Management Team works to develop enhanced preparedness and planning efforts for natural and man-made public health emergencies through the composition and development of plans and training of Homeland Security and Health Care Services Staff. The goal of the team is to distribute medical countermeasures, such as medication and/or vaccines, during a large-scale public health emergency within 48 hours. The Public Health and Emergency Management Team also aims to improve inter-agency and inter-jurisdictional coordination through the development of agreements and routine participation with hospitals, schools, city emergency managers, adjacent county departments, DSHS, NCTCOG, NCTTRAC, as well as non-profit, faith-based and community organizations. Activities of the Bioterrorism Team include the organizing and conducting training and exercises for pandemic influenza, SNS deployment, redundant communications, and other response activities; provide mass care for sheltering operations; and, educate residents regarding disease prevention and control.

Medical Reserve Corps (MRC): The Medical Reserve Corps mission is to improve the health and safety of communities by organizing and utilizing local volunteers. They enhance their response through pre-identifying, credentialing, and training locally recruited volunteers who supplement existing health and emergency response infrastructure during a public health disaster/crisis. MRC members assist with mass prophylaxis dispensing, health education, sheltering operations, and other health and disaster preparedness activities.

Information Sources

Information is collected from an ever-evolving list of federal, state and local resources within both the public and private sectors to include: federal agencies, state agencies, all current local and state fusion centers, open sources, local jurisdictions (local law enforcement agencies, fire departments and county emergency managers), critical infrastructure sector representatives, and private citizens.



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NCTFC Products and Services

The NCTFC provides the following products and services:

- Threat assessments (high profile events)
- Case support and database searches
- Early warning alerts and recommended response protocols
- Requests for Information (RFIs)
- Exercise or intelligence support in an actual event

Law Enforcement Sensitive (LES) reports and For Official Use Only (FOUO) reports will be developed and distributed on an “as-needed” basis in the future.

Guiding Documents

The North Central Texas Fusion Center (NCTFC) follows federal fusion center and information sharing policies. The NCTFC policies, procedures and operations follow the Bureau of Justice Operating Policies for 28 CFR Part 23, Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative Fusion Center Guidelines and the Bureau of Justice National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan as guiding documents.

Privacy Policy

The North Central Texas Fusion Center (NCTFC) is currently revising its privacy policy regarding the center’s operations in order to protect the civil rights and liberties of all Texas citizens.

Conclusion

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is leading the way in innovative security approaches, and Texas has decided to face the new security challenges head on by following the DHS lead. The North Central Texas Fusion Center (NCTFC) has embraced interagency cooperation among federal, state, local, and tribal agencies through information sharing in the effort to protect the North Central Texas region. This information sharing is utilized to improve natural disaster/accident mitigation and response, terrorism prevention, emerging health threat detection, and law enforcement investigation support. Texas is determined to prevent and/or prepare for emergency responses for any incident that may occur.



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Sources

Colorado Information Analysis Center (CIAC) Business Plan and CONOPS, 1 August 2007.

The Texas Homeland Security Strategic Plan 2010-2015, 11 May 2010.